

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

June 22, 2022

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona:

It is very troubling to learn that the Department appears to be following advice from activists to inappropriately target an important sector in postsecondary education. There has been public reporting on a meeting between Federal Student Aid Chief Operating Officer Richard Cordray and the Debt Collective to discuss a memo the organization provided on closing private institutions of higher education without congressional authorization. We understand your Department hears from a wide range of stakeholders, but it is concerning to see signs your staff is following instructions from radical groups.

When the conversation on quality is premised on the tax status of an institution, it is distracted from the most important metric to focus on: student success. Many excellent institutions work hard and competently to educate America's students. For example, for-profit institutions educate over half of the truck drivers in this country, who are critical partners to addressing supply chain shortages, and these same for-profit institutions graduate 44 percent of all nurses of color, who served on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Biden administration is reluctant to support these institutions—but blithely writes billions in blank checks to schools like Columbia University which leave graduate students with \$180,000 in student debt and poverty-level wages.¹ All institutions of higher education should be held accountable for serving their students poorly. But arbitrarily targeting for-profit institutions, while ignoring the atrocious outcomes of their non-profit or public peers, illustrates this administration is more focused on partisan politics than the success of our nation's students.

The evidence that the Department is following the recommendations of an outside memo to dismantle career colleges is deeply concerning. The insinuation that the Department believes it

¹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/financially-hobbled-for-life-the-elite-masters-degrees-that-dont-pay-off-11625752773>.

has the authority to take these grievous actions without Congressional approval is downright alarming. Taxpayers have had enough of executive action and students desperately need reforms to the antiquated law that governs our country's postsecondary education system. We need to prevent bad actors, regardless of classification, from receiving funds, and we must protect and support the programs doing the job of getting Americans to work.

To help us understand what advice the Department has received and which activists the Department is cooperating with, please provide responses to the following requests.

1. All memos received from the Debt Collective or individuals representing the Debt Collective.
2. All correspondence from the Debt Collective or individuals affiliated with the Debt Collective.
3. A list of all meetings between the Debt Collective or individuals representing the organization and staff in any or all of FSA, the Undersecretary's Office, OPEPD, OPE, OGC, and the Secretary's office.
4. All memos or correspondence created by the Department of Education discussing any material or information received from the Debt Collective.
5. A list of speeches, events, and other activities attended by any appointee in FSA, the Undersecretary's office, OPEPD, OPE, OGC, or the Secretary's office.

Please provide this information without delay and as information from each item requested is available.

Sincerely,



Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Education and
Labor



Richard Burr
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions